

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, December 7, 1889, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Sunday, Dec. 7th 1889. Moxee. My dear Alec:

Papa says there is a mail today, so I write to thank you very much for the nice letter that reached me the day after my arrival. It was not waiting for me, but that was not your fault after all. I like your letter to Dr. Gallaudet very much indeed it was straightforward, manly, to the point and very well expressed. I presume he will not raise any objections. I am very sorry that you cannot read aloud to me in the evenings, but glad that you can do so to Mamma. I am so glad to know you two together.

Moxee is a long and broad undulating valley shut in all around by finely-shaped sand hills that only open like a gateway at one point to allow the river to escape into the great world beyond. On every side white snow mountains tower over and beyond the hills, and snow mountains shut in the view beyond the gap. Far and near the eye ranges over the desolate sage-grown valley and sees no sign of human habitation or handiwork except immediately around here. Here to be sure man's work has made the "desert to bloom like a rose." Everywhere along the roadside and cutting across lots are the ditches, and where they run stretch fertile fields while here and there great stacks of hay testify to the harvest that has been. The contrast between the wild apparently barren wastes of sand and sage bush, and the cultivated fields of the Moxee company must be great at spring and summer-time, and is visible even now when all, even the clothes of the workmen seem toned down to one monotonous yellow grey tint. 2 It sounds like a "McCurdy story" to hear Mr. Ker tell of fields that have some rich crops of wheat or hops year after year for twenty-five and even thirty years without other fertilizer than the water that five times a year is made to flood the land. He assures me that the last crop of wheat was better than the first. Tobacco is a

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more exhausting corp, but apparently very remunerative still for they are yearly increasing the acreage put down in tobacco.

I was agreeably surprised and delighted to find that Cowboys and the Wild West are still a present fact. I met a couple of them dashing by on their small active ponies, by sombreros shading their sunburnt faces, the orthodox buckskins on their legs, while their feet were kidden in the big stirrups of their brass mounted Mexican saddles. They were exactly like some of the flaring bill posters of Buffalo Bill's wild west show.

Last night I played whist with a young fellow that might have come out of a modern novel. The son of a very good Scotch family, and grand-nephew of the Duke of Argyle, (poor old gentleman I pity him, his number of disreputable relations) he came out here to seek his fortune as Cowboy. For eighteen months he has been secretary and treasurer of our company, doing very well indeed until the wild spirit of the West got too much for him and he became mixed in a gambling, shooting affray. They say he coolly sat still and dared them to shoot him, and his life was only saved by the intervention of other parties. However Mr. Ker doesn't think this proper behavior for the treasurer and he is going home to get his mother to give him more money. He is a handsome tall young fellow. Then there is 3 a young Irish lady here who having committed the impardonable crime of making a runaway match with another a young fellow her equal in all respects except that he is a Roman Catholic and she a Protestant has been disinherited by her father, and after having tried Australia in vain is now waiting here with her friend Lily while her husband seeks any kind of work in Portland. Unfortunately he was brought up to do nothing, and now he is paying the penalty. The story is much like Cable's, Dr. Servier. I only trust the sequel will be less sad.

I don't know that I have anything else to tell you. It has been raining or threatening to rain ever since we came, and I haven't seen the mountains except through clouds, or indeed anything else. The house is a roomy, comfortable, homelike building, the only drawback seems to be the lack of servants, all they have now is a pretty-faced boy whom Lily has

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taught to cook, and a good-looking Cowboy whom they brought from the stable to wait on table during our visit. I suppose Mamma will have told you that Papa is much pleased with the conditions of things here, and hopes for profit over the expenses in 1891. There are thirty-five miles of land belonging to the Company, land that will be further increased in value by the building of a railway through it.

What do you mean by telegraphing "Laboratory opened today." Do you mean you are going to work on the graphophone?

I have not got the keys of our trunks. I detached mine and gave the others to you. I hope you found them and did not have 4 to break open my trunks.

Much love to you and your father and mother, my mother and children.

Lovingly, Mabel.